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National Reconstruction.

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A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT WESLEY CHAPEL,

WASHINGTON, D. C.,

On the 1st day of June, 1865.

BY THE PASTOR,

B. H. NADAL, D. D.

WASHINGTON, D. C.
WM. H. MOORE, PRINTER, 484 ELEVENTH STREET
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CORRESPONDENCE.

WASHINGTON, D. C., JUNE 1ST, 1865.

To the REV. B. H. NADAL, D. D.
Pastor of Wesley Chapel.

Dear Sir: The undersigned, a committee appointed at the close of the services this day in your church, politely request a copy of your Sermon for publication and circulation.

We have the honor to be,

Yours, most respectfully,

A. M. SCOTT,
J. W. RICKS,
A. F. MOULDEN,
GEORGE E. H. DAY,
W. H. DE MOTTE,
BENJ. LIPPINCOTT.

To A. M. SCOTT, J. W. RICKS, A. F. MOULDEN, GEORGE E. H. DAY, W. H. DE MOTT, and BENJ. LIPPINCOTT, ESQS.

Gentlemen: A copy of my Sermon, delivered on the first instant, is herewith transmitted and placed at your disposal.

Yours truly,

B. H. NADAL.

WASHINGTON, D. C., June 3d, 1865.

K.K. Gf. 12-11

DISCOURSE.

"Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." PSALM 85, 10.

This psalm is a song of grateful joy upon the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon. It begins: "Lord thou hast been favorable to thy land; thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob; thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sin." In this strain the happy people proceed, mingling with their thanksgiving a prayer that they may be revived and saved; that the divine wrath may not be drawn out to all generations, but that the land being delivered, his glory may dwell in it.

The text is a thankful acceptance of the divine mercy in their deliverance from slavery, and their return to their own country. It recognizes the divine hand, and affirms the principles of the divine government. It seems to say: "We are here at home again; this is the country left us by our fathers, who received it from the hand of God. Our palaces are in ruins, our temple a heap of rubbish, our national polity an exploded theory, our capital a desolation; the task of reconstruction with its immense burdens and terrible responsibilities, awaits us. We must rebuild the waste places of Jerusalem; the temple must spring up again under the trowels of our masons; our altar must again rise and smoke, and our government start afresh according to the pattern shown to Moses in the mount. In short, it is the work of reconstruction, to which the singers of this psalm feel themselves called, and the text affirms the principles on which they intend to rebuild their institutions, and establish the peace and happiness of the country. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." That is, peace shall rise and spread and consolidate upon the foundations of truth and righteousness, softened and beautified by mercy.

If these were the principles with which to rebuild ancient Israel, they are equally appropriate to the present day, and to our own history. We are in the very moment of pause between war and peace. We have demolished the rebellion, and possessed ourselves of the ground on which it was built. These heaps of brick and timber that disfigure the soil must be removed, and we must build again. If our Union is to last, the second temple is to surpass the glory of the first. In the work of reconstruction we must eliminate the error and the crime of the former *con*struction. We must rebuild on the rocks of truth and justice, while we garnish the doors, windows, walls and columns of our re-edified temple with the soft and gentle blazonry of mercy. In such a building peace may make her permanent and contented home.

In accordance with this view, our theme is expressed in the following question, namely: What are the chief elements of national reconstruction; how shall we establish a just, and hence a permanent peace? Our text, in general terms, is the answer. Mercy and truth must be wed; righteousness must underlie peace.

Turn we then to these principles of reconstruction, and let us see them applied to the life of the nation.

One of these principles is "truth;" if we are to rebuild rightly, this principle dare not for one moment be ignored. What is it that has necessitated reconstruction? The answer is, what every civilized man knows by heart, namely, that two sections of the nation have been engaged in a deadly conflict for the last four years; the bonds of national unity have been cut with the sword; four thousand millions of property has been destroyed, a debt incurred of three thousand millions, and more than five hundred thousand lives have been sacrificed. The charriots of the rebellion are broken; its President, caught in the disguise of an old woman, is a prisoner in one of the bomb-proofs at Fortress Monroe, and its hired assassins are undergoing a quiet trial for their lives. We are calm. The fever of the war has ceased. Even the grief and indignation in which the nation but recently both bathed and burned, are so far moderated as to leave our judgment free from passion; at least, what still remains of passion serves only to purge us from party, and from earthly bias, that our decisions may be higher, nobler, truer. Now, what have been the great principles of the

just ended struggle; what have been the lies which the rebellion erected into a moloch, and bowed down to worship? What were the truths, if, indeed, truth has been with *us*, for which the Union has been warring, bleeding, sacrificing?

One of the great falsehoods around which the forces of the rebellion gathered, and by which it claimed to justify itself, is the well known doctrine of secession, now handed over to perpetual infamy by the war. The question between the nation and the rebels was, whether or not the United States was one nation or many; whether our history on this continent had made us a distinct and organic nationality, to which the people had given their solemn sanction in the distinct utterances of the Constitution; or whether the individual States were nations, which in the constitution had entered into a mere treaty, which any one of them could withdraw from at its own sovereign pleasure. It is strange that such a dispute was possible; if there had not been a definite end to serve, it never could have arisen. Almost as soon as the colonies had obtained a foothold on the continent, they began to unite for mutual sympathy and defence. Of one language, from one nation, substantially of one religion, with the same enemy to resist, the same usurpations to repel, they were soon drawn closely together. And when the war of the Revolution came, it found the northern and southern colonies already fitted to each other like the blocks of Solomon's temple, which we are told were built together without the sound of a hammer. The American colonies were, in all material respects, of one growth; in the war they had common sentiments, a common enemy, and were formally made *one* by their Continental Congress. They joined in the same noble declaration of independence; they fought side by side in the same battles, and as *one* they conquered their liberties. The mother country regarded them not as separate foes, but as a single enemy, and when she was beaten, she did not acknowledge the independence of the States separately, but the independence of the nation. The triumph was national; not sectional; the leaders in the struggle were national. They covered the whole country with their influence, as they took the whole country into their love and into their plans. Who shall restrict Washington, Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, Hancock and Carroll, to a particular American

locality? Who knows anything of the flag of a separate State? The national banner covered all the States with its folds, and poured on all the glory of its clustered stars.

This natural and national unity awakened in some quarters fear of consolidation, and when the country began to put its life into more regular form there was at first an effort to preserve the spirit of nationality and at the same time to make the individual States sovereign. But the old articles of confederation under which our Union spent the few first years of its independent existence, were soon found inadequate. They established a Congress, but the Congress was not a legislature—it had no power of enforcing its own acts. It was only a consulting and advisory body; such a contrivance did not and could not express the true sentiment of national oneness with which the country had come out of the revolutionary war, and which was embodied in Washington and his companions. To meet this great want, to express the deep, broad sense of nationality which pervaded the soul of the country our present Constitution was formed. In it was uttered, in the strongest possible form, both the unity and supremacy of the whole people, considered not as States, but as people. They pronounced it their own work, wrought in their organic and popular capacity, and declared it, and the laws of Congress under it, to be the supreme law of the land, anything in State laws or State Constitutions to the contrary notwithstanding. Thus was felt and expressed and understood the great doctrine of our nationality and unity. The Constitution of the United States formed a supreme national government, which was none the less sacred because its powers were restricted to broad national purposes.

It may indeed be said that we cannot claim for the doctrine of the national unity the character of a great ethical, or even a great abstract political truth; that all States having a common history, a common language and a common religion are not necessarily under one government. In proof of this, we may be pointed to the many independent states of Germany and to the republics of ancient Greece. True enough; but when the national unity has come to distinct consciousness, as it did in our early history; when it has written itself down in the form of an organic supreme law, as it did in our Constitution; when it sets up a Supreme Court as the

ultimate tribunal, when it comes to administer the oath of allegiance, by which presidents, judges, senators and members of Congress, solemnly acknowledge the authority of their States to be inferior to that of the Union;—when all this takes place, then for the American people national unity becomes a fundamental principle, it underlies the whole national life, and in its oaths of office, and other forms of obligation, it reaches over into the sphere of ethics, so that the advocacy of secession becomes a crime, both against the supreme law of the Country and against the law of God; it involves treason against the nation, and the prostitution of the conscience by perjury.

Men frequently speak of political questions as though they could have no moral bearings, and denounce any allusion to such questions in the pulpit as political preaching. It is difficult to say who are the more silly, those who thus prate or those who are scared by such talk away from a solemn duty. Politics indeed! What is the meaning of the 23d Article of our creed which avouches the allegiance of our whole church to the government of the United States? This is politics, of course, and aught to be handed over to these would-be censors of the pulpit and the religious press, to be expunged. Let these thoughtless people know that every question that touches the practice of human life has its moral aspects. The grocer is confronted by the moral law when he weighs sugar and coffee, the dry goods' dealer when he handles his yard stick; and both, when they come to write their accounts. They may weigh, measure, reckon falsely. Will the wisdom which talks of political preaching tell us that we must not preach against false weights and measures, against unjust accounts, against sanded sugar and watered molasses, nor against selling calicos of unstable colors with a promise they shall never fade, because in so doing we are getting out of the preacher's into the tradesman's sphere? The absurdity is manifest. Every one knows that the practice of common life has its moral side, its relations to the law of God, and stands amenable to the christian conscience as uttering itself in the pulpit.

Thus too is it with political questions; when they are practical they touch the sphere of morals; they become yoked with sin or righteousness, and merit the rebuke or the praise of the christian

pulpit. Secession gave the lie to a fundamental truth; it set itself up for the place of that truth. It armed itself for deadly grapple with that truth to destroy it. It has had its flag and its armies, and dealt its blows, but the great American, constitutional truth of the Union, has triumphed. Now what we wish to say is, that in reconstructing, in establishing peace for the coming ages of American growth, we must have due regard to the great truth of national unity. If the holy and blessed truth of national unity and supremacy is to meet returning rebels with the kiss of mercy, the salutation must be most discreet. The holy truth must beware of dalliance; it must not lay the locks of its strength on the lap of the sorceress. The old idea of State sovereignty must perish with the rebellion by which it was begotten. Let it be understood, once for all, that the States have no rights but such as are consistent with the absolute, indestructible unity of the nation; and let the silly idea that a citizen's first allegiance is due to his particular State, be henceforth remembered only as a demon of falsehood, now forever exorcised, who, having slain his hundreds of thousands, has returned to his own place. Let every State in the Union, at the earliest opportunity, follow the example of Maryland, and insert into its Constitution the great truth of the supremacy and sovereignty of the Union. Let the rebel States now returning from their bloody wild-goose chase after secession be aided in ridding themselves of the very memory of their error; let them be kept in friendly military care, and every proper form and degree of assistance given them in reconstruction, hooping them up if necessary, with military iron, into the Union, until the sundered parts grow together again.

Another great truth over which this war has been waged is much broader and grander than that of national unity; it is the higher unity of humanity. The first great truth is national, the second is universal. The first affirms the United States to be one country, the second declares mankind to be one family. The first truth is the unity of the nation; the first falsehood is secession. The second and greater truth is the unity of the human family, the second falsehood, including almost every possible wrong, is slavery.

I will not insult your intelligence by proving the proposition,

that man is man; that common human attributes make a common human brotherhood. The simple fact that men *are* men, constitutes humanity a unit. Now what part of this human brotherhood shall be owners, and what part shall be owned? Suppose all men now free, and slavery about to be reinaugurated; what tribes would you select as having no rights? Where would any just or honest man pick out his slave? The very question is monstrous. Enslave a free man! That would be man-stealing. In that precisely began the slavery of this country. We have called secession the first falsehood; we only meant that we would mention it first in order. The primal falsehood of our late struggle, that which, entrenching itself in avarice, nursing itself in tyranny and cruelty, puffing up itself with pride, began the war to secure and perpetuate its life, was slavery. It was the deliberate assertion of the naked principle of force as against the rights of a helpless people. It deliberately asserted that men could and ought to be owned, on the simple ground that they were black, or any other color than regular Caucasian; and that even that favorite and dominant color might be owned where a drop of the proscribed blood could be found in the veins.

This idea met resistance. It was questioned in the pulpit, in the halls of legislation, in the newspapers, and then reasserted again and again, with ever waxing violence, by its advocates. By repeated open assaults and flank movements. it gained ground in the Government; it secured more and more territory; it climbed up to the highest judicial eminence, and at last demanded to be made national. Finally, it fought, and that with characteristic disregard of morals. It was but natural that those who began with denying the rights of a part of the human race, who refused letters, marriage, parental and filial relations, property and liberty, to millions of people; who sold men, women and children like beasts, should be reckless of the lives of prisoners. A lie, especially a great one, reduced to practice, necessarily becomes cruel. It perverts the conscience; it is, in itself, a sort of moral or internal perjury; it foreswears all obligations, except to confederates in crime. It was thus with the denial of human rights by those lately in rebellion against the United States. What hate, unrelenting as the grave, they have displayed. Cast one glance, only one, at

prison life among them, at Andersonville, at Salisbury, at Richmond; remember the dead line, and weep for the hundredth time over the starved thousands of our Union soldiers. Recall Fort Pillow and Lawrence; turn your eye toward the military court now in session for the trial of the greatest, smallest, meanest criminals the world ever saw; see Richmond and Canada conspiring for the accomplishment of the bloody deed; and finally, behold Dr. Blackburn at work by bribery, in combination with the Canada rebels, to deluge all the great cities of the North with yellow fever and small pox; even sending an infected box as a special present to the Chief Magistrate of the United States.

We have here a pitch of wickedness, almost transcending human thought. Look! the greatest civil war of history begun for slavery; sixty thousand purposely starved Union prisoners; every great city in the Union intended to be filled with plague; the plague itself positively packed up and sent forward; and finally, the murder of the President and all his cabinet with other loyal leaders, plotted by the slave confederacy—by its cabinet and by its agents in Canada, and the most fearful part of the plot actually carried out. It is stupendous, it is overwhelming, past belief; but there is Ford's theatre; there are the murderers; there is Dr. Blackburn, and there is the evidence. Of all these inconceivable monstrosities this lie against human rights of which we have spoken, is the parent. If men loved and worshipped a system that wronged profoundly, infinitely wronged four millions of people, turned them into dumb driven cattle, why should it be thought strange that they should do these other things, or indeed anything? It is not strange. It is only the adder coming forth from the egg. It is only the lie of slavery truthfully expressing itself; it is a community corrupted by a great falsehood, trying by the strain of every nerve to establish that falsehood on the ruins of the truth which it contradicts.

The affirmation and the denial of human rights have now been engaged in a deadly struggle for four years. Liberty has triumphed. The bloody temples of the rebellion are levelled with the ground. The great truth of human liberty as a natural right, has been practically vindicated. In all the States that rebelled, that declared by their course that slavery was divine, there now remains not a single

slave. We have been tested, and found capable, by God's blessing, of upholding the truth. If the war had ended sooner, the sacred truth of liberty as a human birthright had been only partially vindicated. But God protracted the struggle, giving us only partial success, and encouraging the foe to fight on until his ranks were decimated, and his resources utterly exhausted. We had a leader, a God-given ruler, wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove, who knew how to wait and how to advance. He felt himself firmly bound by his oath of office, and yet ardently "desired that all men might be free." He hoped and waited for the time to come when the official oath and the obligations and sympathies of humanity would unite in demanding the word of liberation. He read the heavens for the handwriting of God, and found it. He wrote the great truth of the struggle, the divine, humanitarian truth of liberty, in the form of an emancipation proclamation. That blow, that pen scrape, was mightier than half a million of swords; it was a successful appeal to heaven, and a solemn assurance to all foreign nations; it ended his own doubts, and settled beyond revocation the policy of the Government. The heart of the nation, the intellect of the nation was at once and forever identified with the highest political and ethical truth of the earthly human life. *Magna charta* shrivels with shame before the emancipation proclamation; the declaration of independence was a brave proposition; the emancipation proclamation translated it into glorious, eloquent action. As long as history shall gather and garner her treasures, she shall add fresh lustre to the name of him who penned the emancipation proclamation.

By a proclamation of the present Chief Magistrate, the emancipation proclamation is virtually made law throughout the conquered States. This great truth of human rights therefore comes out of the war victorious. Slavery, instead of winning the stake for which she played the game of war, has only committed suicide; she meant to assert her nationality, instead of which she is blotted out of existence. What now shall we do with liberty? We answer we must use her in reconstruction. The ark has outridden the storm, she must now be the home of all and the sanctuary of the oppressed. We must see to it that in restoring the broken-down governments of the South liberty shall preside. No pro-slavery

element must enter conventions, or touch constitutions or legislatures. God has given sacred liberty in trust to us for the future age.

But if truth is to be an element in the renewed Union so also is righteousness, that is, justice. We are not only to guard the truths of national unity and universal liberty and to prolong and perpetuate them in the land; we must come to the practice of them. We must "lay righteousness to the line and judgment to the plummet." The truth is beautiful, it is fine to "point a moral or adorn a tale;" but it demands to be more than a well-preserved fossil, or a beautiful picture. It must be a massive hammer in the hand of justice to break in pieces hoary abuses. Righteousness is truth applied to practical purposes, to the redress of wrongs, to giving the oppressed their due, to the punishment of persistent wrong-doers.

The new status offers a fair field for the redress of grievances. The black man now free, must not be trammelled by injurious legislation. Like men of other complexions he must be allowed a fair field. We must not treat him as though God had cursed him black, when we ourselves by our own wickedness have established the connection between bondage and color. It has been but little more than a dozen centuries since our British forefathers were brutal savages, often exposed for sale in the markets of imperial Rome. If we have come to such culture from such savagery, what may not be done by the freedmen of this country, all born among us, and rapidly advancing in civilization? Only let us treat them justly and even generously, as those who in this war have been our friends to a man, who to the number of two hundred thousand, in many a fierce battle, have vindicated their patriotism against the foe, and their manhood against the fears of their friends and the sneers and reproaches of their enemies. In proportion to population the blacks have perhaps furnished more soldiers for the Union than the whites. And in some of the conquered States almost the only friends of our cause are the freedmen. Shall we proscribe them while we labor in vain to whitewash men reeking with treason, into patriots and citizens? We hope not. Let righteousness look down, nay come down from heaven and dwell; let the new peace come, arm in arm, and heart to heart, with justice. God

will no more endure our proscription of the freedman than our retention of him in bonds.

But if there is a justice of remuneration there is another of *retribution*. God has already visited the sin of secession, the crime of rebellion, the iniquity of slavery with failure and overthrow. The mad Babel of these wicked builders has fallen crushingly on their own heads. As a people they are overwhelmed. This is the justice which divine Providence metes out. But if God has avenged the trampled principles of his government, He has still left something for us. Civil government is a divine ordinance; it holds the sword of God, as well as his power of mercy and protection. The very life and heart of this nation have been struck at by traitors; and while we would pity and pardon the masses, not to punish the leaders were to invite future disorder and future treason. Let there be as little punishment as may be consistent with the sanctity of law, but no less.

Old Sir Thomas Brown pitied the Devil, perhaps as a fallen angel. Almost every noble nature pities a fallen foe. As one rebel chief after another is brought in a prisoner, I own I feel my heart moved with natural compassion. But then righteousness demands its place in the reconstructed edifice. And besides, the great leaders of the rebellion have been so intoxicated by pride and ambition, have been so filled with high flown conceit of their own greatness and superiority that they would perhaps despise the nation's pity, and consider it only another proof of weakness and inferiority. See what delectable impudence the rebels now in Canada have lately poured forth in their letters. The letter of Jacob Thompson, recently printed in the New York Tribune, if it had only been less coarse, might have been dictated by the arch-fiend himself. Mercy for such men were cruelty to law and order, and an insult to the memory of our brothers that sleep in the fresh graves dug by rebellion.

No, we cannot rebuild our Union without justice; it would lack stately grandeur and imposing dignity; it would lack that bright awe-inspiring purity which attracts virtue while it strikes dismay to the hearts of all classes of criminals. We must reconstruct with justice, justice toward men of all complexions, justice remunerative, and justice retributive.

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